

Creative Storytelling at the Forest Centre: Our experience of the TimeSlips™ method

Forest Centre

A purpose built 24 bed unit providing acute mental health assessment and treatment to older adults, including 8 specialist dementia beds.



Using a person-centred approach, treatment is provided for patients in the early stages of dementia to those with more complex needs, in preparation for discharge to their own home with support, or an appropriate care provider. Staff provide meaningful activities to promote the wellbeing of their patients.

A collaboration with the University of Northampton led to a trial of an innovative method of engaging with people with dementia: TimeSlips™.

'It's good, I like to tell a story' (storyteller)

'There is a real buzz, a relaxed atmosphere and much laughter. There are plenty of ideas from the storytellers and the scribe struggles to keep up with writing down the story.'
(facilitator)

TimeSlips™

TimeSlips™, devised by Anne Basting in 1998, is a storytelling method using photographic images as a way to create an imaginative story. Using a series of open questions, participants are encouraged to contribute to the development of a story evoked from the picture, rather than the pressure of using memory.

Two desperate ladies on the beach (what they want they won't get)



Photo courtesy of George Eastman House

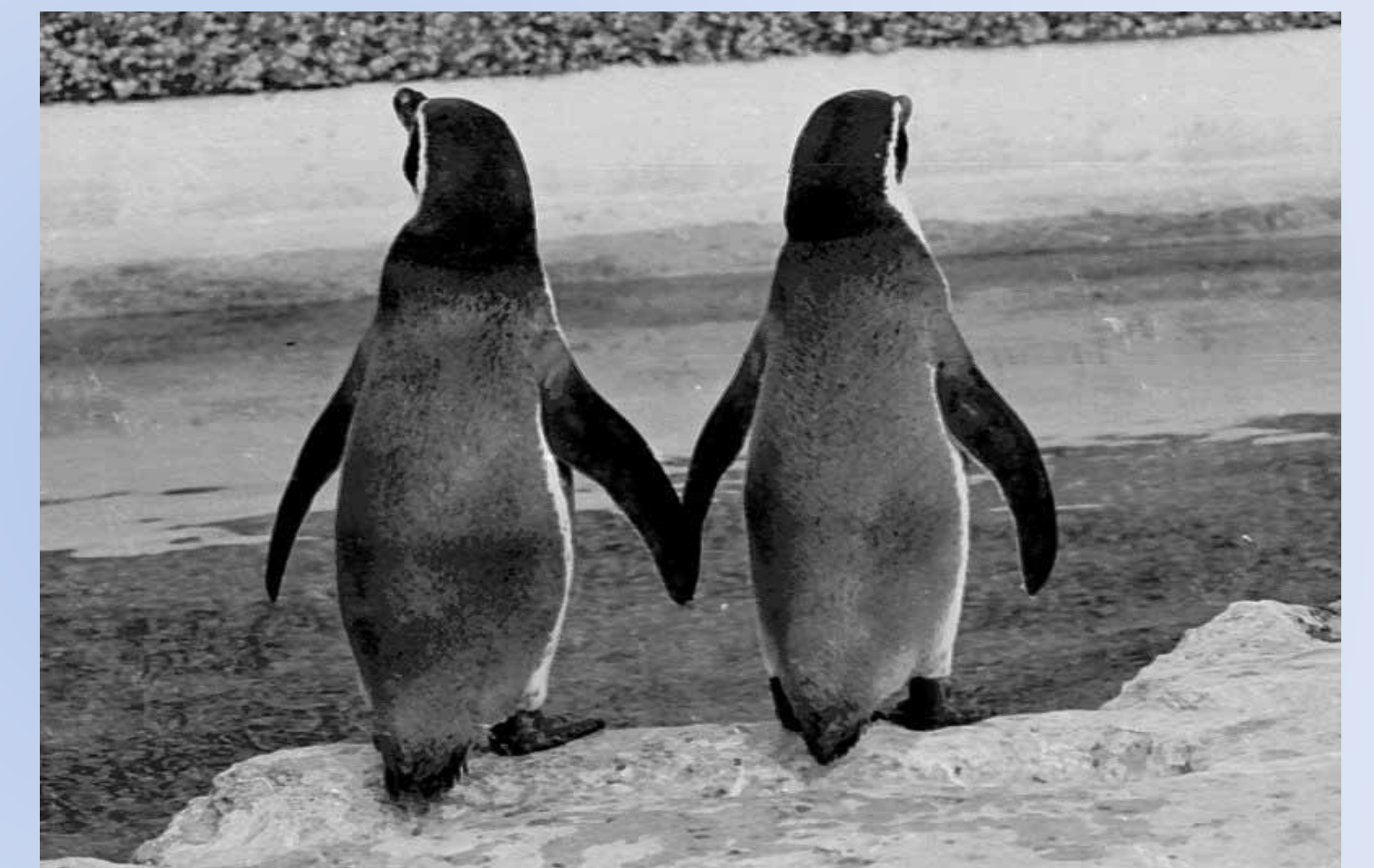
'...There isn't anyone else on the beach – but this may not be the case. They are friends and are after a man. We used to let the man make the first move – but women should make the first move – but we don't because the man would laugh if we said "how about it?".

Maybe the ladies might lift their skirts to show what they are wearing underneath – they are worse than nowadays.

The ladies have fallen out with boyfriends and are looking for someone else – on the open. They've just met – "do you come here often" – but is this something women say to men?...

The Wandering/Wondering Penguins

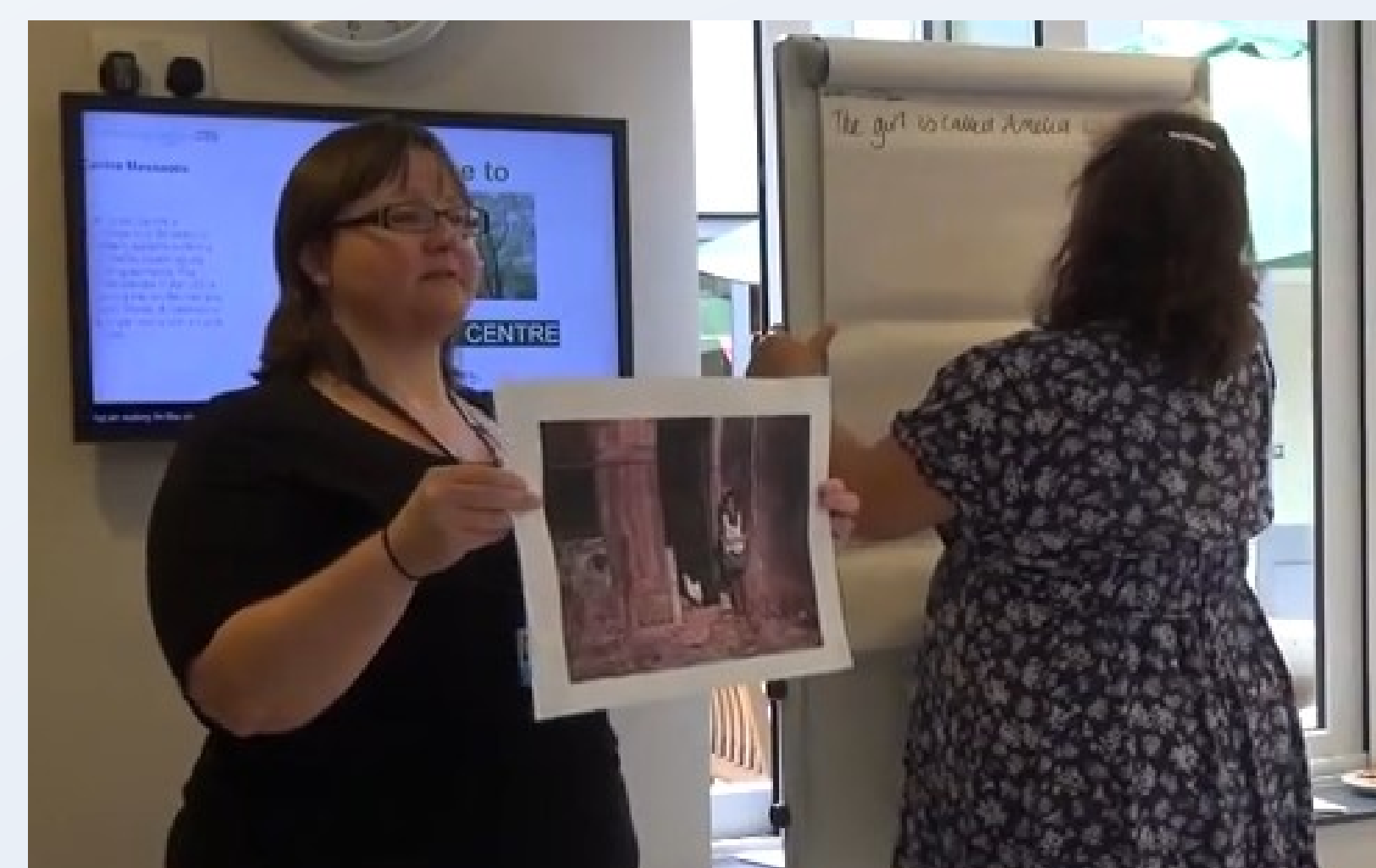
'... Do they have a pocket? If they did, they would have a baby in it. Do they sleep lying down or standing? Maybe they lie down and the sea comes in to help them up...'



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Our approach

Weekly sessions are run for patients diagnosed with dementia. Sessions last about 30 minutes. The group size varies from 2-10. Everyone's contribution is recorded verbatim, creating a colourful tapestry of words. The story is regularly re-told and a final story typed and distributed to patients, staff and families to share and enjoy.



'It is allocated time to explore their thoughts... sometimes just a picture can spark something... and you don't know where it's going to take you.'
(staff)

Outcomes

Patient benefits include:

- ❖ Taking pride in being part of the storytelling process
- ❖ Sharing stories with their visitors
- ❖ Being surprised at their own creativity
- ❖ Having feelings of ownership
- ❖ No longer being just a patient, but a co-author

Other benefits:

- ❖ It is seen by some as a highlight of the week
- ❖ Stories can be **intelligent**, **humorous**, **reflective**, **creative**, **imaginative** and include **personal memories**
- ❖ Stories include sight of the person behind the dementia
- ❖ Staff look forward to reading the latest story

I don't wanna be a chicken!



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'...they are going to Jack's Bar. When they get to Jack's Bar it'll be party time! The music will be Spanish music and they will have a drink.

After the party he could roast chickens – or make chicken tikka – they should be grateful. Does he have a family? There is one missing if he's roasted one! The family are not happy they roasted a chicken, she laughs – she'll laugh every time she sees a chicken.

We don't want to be a chicken! Is it the end of the story – well it's the end of one of the chickens!

Reference: Basting, A. D. (2011) TimeSlips Training Manual: Creative Storytelling with People with Dementia. Wisconsin-Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Centre on Age and Community.

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